

ELLIOTT (S)

AN ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT

THE OPENING OF THE FIRST SESSION

OF THE

Savannah Medical College,

ON THE 7<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 1853,

BY RT. REV. STEPHEN ELLIOTT, JR. D. D.,  
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF GEORGIA.

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SAVANNAH:

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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SAVANNAH, NOV. 8TH, 1853.

Rt. Rev'd. STEPHEN ELLIOTT, JR., D. D.

*Dear Sir* :—At a Meeting of the Faculty of the "Savannah Medical College," held in the College building this day, the following resolution was unanimously adopted :

*Resolved*, That the thanks of the Faculty be, and are hereby tendered to the Rt. Rev'd. STEPHEN ELLIOTT, JR., D. D., for his most appropriate and instructive Address, delivered yesterday at the opening of the College, and that a copy be solicited from him for the purpose of publication.

The undersigned were appointed a Committee to convey to you the above resolution, and respectfully solicit your compliance. We have the honor to be, dear sir,

Very respectfully, your ob't. serv'ts.,

H. L. BYRD, M. D.

E. H. MARTIN, M. D.

J. G. HOWARD, M. D.

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SAVANNAH, NOV. 10, 1853.

Drs. BYRD, MARTIN and HOWARD,

*Gentlemen* :—Yours of the 8th reached me yesterday. I am gratified that my Address answered the views of the Medical Faculty, and place it at your disposal.

Very respectfully, your ob't. serv't.

STEPHEN ELLIOTT, JR.

To H. L. BYRD, M. D., E. H. MARTIN, M. D., and J. G. HOWARD, M. D., Savannah.

## ADDRESS.

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It may, at first sight, seem strange, that one engaged in the Christian Ministry, whose whole thoughts and studies are, by his consecration vows, enjoined to be given to spiritual things, should have been selected to address you upon an occasion like the present. It would appear far more appropriate that a medical man, one interested, like yourselves, in the progress of the noble Science to which you are devoted, whose mind was stored with the rich treasures of learning which your Profession has been laying up for ages, whose experience might illustrate that learning from the circle of its own extended observation, should inaugurate this noble enterprize, should introduce to the State and to the Country this new manifestation of the earnest determination of our city to take its proper rank among the promoters of liberal knowledge of whatever kind. Such an orator, methinks, should have been more likely to speak from the heart to the heart—to enkindle sympathy in those who caught his words of knowledge and experience—to excite these young gentlemen to a sterner emulation for the prizes of reputation and the rewards of fortune he would have embodied before them. But it has pleased you to determine otherwise, and my presumption in undertaking such a task must find its excuse in having been the result of your unbiassed choice. One thing I can safely say, that no one, even of your profession, could have brought to the task a stronger conviction of the wisdom of this undertaking, or a higher admiration for its masterly boldness, or warmer wishes for its complete success.

It is only at first sight, however, that our professions appear to be so diverse, and even though they were not at once brought together by the common interest which we all alike feel in every effort to advance the greatness and prosperity of our beloved city, they could be made to unite and sympathize at very many points of social and moral interest.

One concerned about the welfare of the soul can never be indifferent about the condition of the body, for so intimately have they been united together, and so delicate is the tracery through which they operate upon each other, that the Physician of the body can never be independent of the operations of the moral system, nor on the other hand, can the Physician of the soul be sure of the comfort he must administer until he understand the state of the system which enshrines the jewel of immortality. When our Saviour, our noblest exemplar, was developing to the world the wonderful scheme of its redemption, he accompanied his Heavenly teachings with the tenderest sympathy for human woes, and illustrated his love for the creatures he had come to save, by exerting his divine power for their relief from bodily suffering. He did not deem the skill of the Physician to be other than a handmaid of mercy to his spiritual instruction. He sanctified the union of bodily and spiritual healing by combining them in himself. It is unbelief which would put asunder what God has inseparably joined together.

There is no body of men who are brought more into contact with Physicians than that class which is engaged about the salvation of the soul. With the other learned professions, the Physician sometimes comes into conjunction, but the Clergyman he meets at every point. They stand together, the closest friends which every well ordered family has outside its own sacred circle, side by side, in every one of those tenderest scenes, whether of joy or suffering, which form the memorial spots of human life. At the cradle and at the grave, by the bed of sickness and in the halls of rejoicing, when the spirit is first entering upon its existence, as well as when it is returning to the God who gave it, they are found connected by the simultaneous wants of body and soul. Nature and Revelation combine to force them into conjunction, and it is only when an insane jealousy or a shortsighted faithlessness perverts their better judgment, that they do not act together in harmony and peace. It is truly beautiful when a Physician combines, with his own skill in healing, a power likewise to pour the oil of consolation into the

wounded spirit, to give comfort to the smitten heart, to speak peace to the alarmed conscience. It is highly useful, when the Clergyman, while he speaks truth to the mind and mercy to the heart, can also prescribe for the suffering body and the diseased system; but more beautiful and more useful far when, side by side, they enter the house of sickness or of mourning, and harmonize their mature experience upon the mysterious combination of life and spirit which lies before them in its weakness. None, therefore, should more rejoice in any effort to elevate the medical profession, and advance its power, than the Clergyman. None should be more willing to lend his aid, whatever that may be, to an Institution for the instruction, the discipline and the refinement, of young men destined for the practice of physic.

Before a city can aspire to embrace within its bosom literary institutions of any magnitude, it must attain a certain extent of resource and population—it must create facilities of intercourse with its neighbours—it must give warrant that it shall be able to furnish such appliances of education as will place it upon a level with older and more advanced communities. The moment it has reached that point of maturity, it will not be true to itself, if it does not at once make an effort to furnish to its own children, and those with whom it stands most nearly in connexion, all the means which may be necessary to prepare them for life in any calling which they may choose to embrace. It is no longer a mere right which rank and position give it, but it is a duty which it owes to society to take its part in the advancement of knowledge, in the discipline of life, in the refinement of manners. All presumption vanishes before the sacred demands which its citizens make upon it, and what under one condition of things might be rashness or folly, under another becomes, not only wisdom, but pure moral obligation. In all such cases, the point for determination is, whether a community is ripe for an Institution which prepares to take a place and a name in its midst.

The rapid growth of our city for the ten years just passed, the great increase of its wealth and population, the wonder-

ful developement of its resources of every kind, demand some evidence of its sense of the importance of intellectual culture proportionate to its improvement of another kind. Mere physical progress can never elevate a city or a people; it may accumulate riches—it may bring together masses of human beings—it may create articles of consumption, and gain itself a name in the marts of commerce—but unless those riches be applied to the cultivation of the mind—unless institutions of learning are established and nurtured among those masses—unless a refined taste grows up with that commercial spirit, that city or that people will never attain any thing like moral power in the world, will never wield that influence over mind and spirit which shall make its name a joy among the nations of the Earth. That Athens, whose literary spirit still hovers over the world, furnishing it with its models, condemning it with its criticism, elevating it through its Poets, refining it through its standard of taste, never, in its palmyest days, contained a larger population of freemen than will soon be gathered within our borders. The Attica whose wars make up the study of our younger lives, whose achievements have thrown into the shade, through the magic charm of literature, those of mightiest Empires, contained within its whole extent less of surface than is embraced within the four counties which lie upon our sea coast between this city and the Altamaha. No! my hearers—it is not extent of territory, it is not masses of population, it is not the accumulation of wealth, which make the impress of a people upon the world—it is intellectual culture—it is the developement of science and literature—it is the collision of mind with mind—it is the energy to seize upon the scattered rays of knowledge as they float up and down among the nations, and concentrate them into one bright focus of light and glory. We have already, at the South, too long neglected these things, and feel fastening upon us a condition of dependence which every day it will be more difficult to break. Rather let us see enterprizes that may be accounted hazardous than a continuance of apathy and indifference on our part.

Among the very earliest institutions which a city may safely introduce is a Medical School, because medicine is a necessity of human nature, and is as much needed as the food which nourishes us, or the garments which clothe us. Different systems of Physic may prevail at different times—one school of medicine may reign supreme to-day, and another in the next generation—but in some form or other we find it demanded through the Earth as inevitably as sickness is our lot and death our inheritance. We cannot do without the Physician. We must have him as a domestic commodity or as an importation. Fear demands him—affection demands him—comfort demands him—hope demands him, and a people without its Medicine men would be as hard to find as a people without Arms, or Priests, or a God. And the demand is incessant, for every increase of population calls for an increase of Physicians, and the dreadful wear and tear of the profession is forever requiring new recruits to fill the gaps which exposure and contagion and a generous fearlessness are daily making in its ranks. Institutions for their preparation are ever increasing, and yet the supply never appears to exceed the demand. Not many years ago, and one or two Medical Schools were sufficient for the whole Union. Philadelphia seemed for a time to monopolize the Science, and not only to monopolize it, but to be determined to confine it within one institution. After a time, the opinion worked itself into life, that it might be possible to build up a Medical School at some other point, and Baltimore and Charleston each ventured, in its turn, to invade the almost sacred prerogative with which the genius of Rush and the skill of Physic and the experience of a long succession of mature Professors had invested the city of their fame. I well remember the timidity with which the subject was approached in the city which was then my home—the seeming audacity of those who dared to venture upon such untried ground—the harsh croakings of those who maintained that it would never be sustained, and must perish from inanition. To these forebodings its distinguished prosperity has been the completest answer. Augusta next

tried the experiment, and that too was considered as a wild, irrational scheme, separated as it was from Charleston by only a few hours of distance. But that, too, has utterly disappointed all the auguries which were cast upon it, and yearly gathers within its halls a large body of candidates for the honors of your noble profession. The mistake which is ever made by these Prophets of failure consists in this, that they cannot keep pace with the progressiveness of our country, and forget that what was enough for five millions of people cannot be enough for twenty millions, and that a school which answered the necessities of a State when it counted a few hundred thousand inhabitants, must by no means be reckoned as sufficient for that same State when it has reached its million and opened out itself, through its network of internal improvements, into connexion with other millions. The supply has never yet exceeded the demand, for the professions, like every thing else where man is free, must follow that universal law. So long as the new schools of medicine are yearly increasing in the size of their classes, there need be no fear that a vigorous shoot like this will perish, especially when we look at the favorable soil in which it has been planted.

A Medical School, more than any other, requires to be local, for while, of course, the human system is the same all the world over—while the great principles which govern the well-being of that system are likewise the same—there is a modification of the system which is peculiar to every clearly distinct section of country and which must be examined in its own locality and under its own forms of disease. The more widely, therefore, that Medical Colleges are diffused, the more likely is it that the graduates of those Colleges will go forth well prepared to meet the diseases which will first offer themselves to their attention. They may not be so comprehensively educated—they may not hear in their Lecture rooms so many abstract principles discussed—they may not see, in their Hospitals, such various forms of disease, as in larger cities and institutions, where are concentrated the collections and preparations of centuries, but they will

understand more thoroughly the peculiar types of disease with which they will be called at once to grapple, and will be safer practitioners for those who are cast upon their early skill and care. And this is of the last importance in the medical profession. In other liberal studies a man's ignorance may only expose himself or involve a loss of money or property, but in medicine it is, from the beginning, a matter of life and death; and the young Physician would be, in all ordinary cases, a safer guide, who had received his training at a local institution, whose lecturers were all busied, in their daily practice, with the forms of disease under just the aspect in which he would first meet them, than he, who had not enjoyed the opportunity of this local observation, however ancient may have been his Alma Mater—however world-wide the fame of his lecturers. I should rather, for example, for one of the fevers of our climate, be in the hands of a Physician of the merest local reputation, who was experienced in the diseases of the country, than under the skill of the most renowned practitioner to whom the particular type of fever was unknown. Do not understand me, however, as underrating, in the least degree, the advantages of extended learning—of that learning which you have gathered at so much cost and pains in the most famous institutions of our own and foreign lands, and which you are preparing to use for the instruction of these young gentlemen who have entrusted themselves to your guidance. I am only shewing the necessity of local institutions for that large class of our young countrymen who must struggle with life from its very commencement and can afford neither to travel far for their learning nor wait long for the return of their labor. To such, and they form a very large proportion of our medical students, an immediate practice is necessary for subsistence, and a local experience must serve them until they can reap the benefit of such improvements as can only be found in long established institutions, at the great fountain heads of Medical Science.

Savannah forms just such a local centre and has just such a connexion with and an influence upon a large section of

our Southern country. It is naturally connected by climate and disease with all that territory which sweeps away from the Savannah river to the most southern point of Florida, and which extends in another direction to the Alabama river. Its Rail roads have already connected it directly with one half of the State of Georgia, and will soon connect it with the whole of Florida and with a large portion of Alabama. Its Medical College, if true to itself, will become the natural school for all the Physicians which that wide extent of country will demand—a country already rapidly increasing in population, and only awaiting its proper outlets to the Atlantic to increase still more rapidly and extensively. We scarcely yet conceive what is to be the future of this our city—the most sanguine hardly dreams of the vast resources of that yet comparatively unsettled territory which is waiting to pour its treasures into her lap the moment she shall be wise enough to grasp it. All that has been achieved is as nothing in comparison with that which is before us. All our present prosperity, our rapid extension, our swelling population, are but the beginnings of a growth which shall make Savannah a metropolis worthy of the Empire State of the South. And it is a prosperity which cannot be taken from her. Nature has given it to her—her local position will insure it to her. What she has already gained through her present lines of inter-communication may be competed for by other sections of our own State and by adjacent cities—but what lies south and south-west of us—the land of flowers—the inconceivably rich valleys of the Flint and the Chatahoochie—the virgin lands of eastern Alabama—none can contest with her except at such disadvantage that it will be useless to wage the conflict. And with this influx of wealth and influence all that country has a right to call upon her to prepare institutions for the nurture of its sons, and especially to furnish a School of Medicine, in which the great principles of the Science shall be made subservient to the health and comfort of those inhabiting a like climate and breathing a like atmosphere with herself. Nothing in life can be more sure than the success of this College, and

though for a few years it may have to struggle with the difficulties which are inherent in the beginning of all such undertakings, and against the prejudices of all new and untried experiments, the time will surely come when it will spread its wings of healing over a large extent of rich and cultivated country, and be the fountain of knowledge for thousands yet unborn.

And while this College shall thus exert a beneficial influence over territory outside of itself, I cannot but hope that it may become the nucleus of science for our hitherto apathetic city. Our Historical Society is, at present, the only literary centre which exists among us, and we sadly need some rallying point for the genius and the knowledge which have no utterance because they have no concentration. The Natural Sciences connect themselves at so many points with Medicine—run so naturally into the studies and the pursuits of the Physician,—that it seems almost a necessary consequence of the establishment of this College that there should spring up a taste and a cultivation for those pursuits which add so much to the pleasure and the purity of life. Popular lectures upon science and art—Museums in which shall be gathered collections in all the departments of Natural Science—endowments which shall give us suitable structures for purposes like these—municipal and State patronage which shall convince our people that dividends of money are not the only returns which enrich a city and aggrandize a people, will, I trust, all follow, and that with rapidity, in the track of this bold movement. What is done in the spirit of earnest enthusiasm will kindle reciprocal enthusiasm. A few ardent minds, steadfastly pursuing noble purposes, will ultimately excite other minds that shall extend and perpetuate those purposes. For many long and weary years one individual\* pursued, in our neighboring State, solitary and alone, his scientific studies. Scarcely a voice cheered him in his labors, and but for the inborn love of nature which possessed him, and the rich pleasure which it gave his own gentle spirit, he must early have abandoned such pursuits.

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\* Hon. STEPHEN ELLIOTT, L. L. D., of Charleston, S. C.—[Com.]

But a steady perseverance—a quiet, determined enthusiasm—a word uttered in season to the young, as opportunity offered itself, in time worked their effect, and when his mantle fell from his time-honored person, it was caught up and nobly worn by Ravenel, and Holbrook, and Bachman, and Gibbs, and Holmes, and a host of younger spirits, who are making Charleston, under the now inspiring presence of Agassiz, one of the centres of science for the Union. And among us is there now a like solitary individual,\* who is pursuing, in quiet retirement, upon the shores of his native isle, studies which have already made him far better known to Europe than he is to many of you, which attract to his country home the scientific traveler and the literary amateur, which will, one day, if life be spared him, give him a name among those whom the world will not willingly let die. May his example animate us—may his spirit of industry and of labor take possession of us, and while we pay our homage to his acquirements, may this institution become the means of displaying more fully to the world his accurate knowledge and profound researches. With him and the Le Contes, there is already in the State a nucleus for Natural Science, which needs nothing but concentration for its rapid enlargement and eminent success. May this institution be the channel for its wholesome and rapid diffusion.

It has sometimes happened that the ardent pursuit of Science has turned away the mind from the vital truths of our holy religion, and a scientific man has come to be considered as, to a certain extent, a necessary foe to revelation. While I consider this as, in some measure, a conclusion based upon a very narrow induction, I fear that too much reason has been given for the opinion which pervades the popular mind, that the science of Theology has somehow or other become divorced from its natural allies the sciences of Nature. And in this matter there have been faults on both sides—on the part of theologians, by making a received interpretation of Revelation to represent rigidly and unalterably Revelation itself—on the part of scientific men, by drawing

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\* JAMES HAMILTON COUPER, Esq., of Hopeton.

hasty conclusions against Revelation from Sciences imperfectly developed and immaturely considered. Both parties seem to have forgotten that they were studying the truths of the same God, the one in Nature and the other in Revelation, and that their great effort should be to harmonize the sensible and the spiritual, and to lead the glorious voices of Nature, which declare the power and the wisdom of God, into harmony with those gentler accents which proclaim his mercy and his grace. Surely any Being, who deserves the worship of rational creatures, must provide for their moral and spiritual as fully as for their natural wants, and it seems monstrous to suppose that He who "giveth to the beast his food and to the young ravens which cry," should have made no provision for the hunger of the heart, for the inward cry of bitterness which is wrung, by the natural operation of things, from the noblest of his creatures. Even an earthly parent is not satisfied with providing only for the body of his child—the mind, the heart, the affections, are all cultivated, and the necessities of the spirit are cared for as diligently as those of the casket which enshrines it. How unnatural and how unwise then for the votaries of Science to dissever the two great revelations of God, that which he has made of his sterner attributes in Nature, and of his gentler attributes in his Word. Let the theologian manifest less timidity and more candour, and the scientific man more modesty and less presumption, and the Sciences would very soon be found to present, not only no antagonism to Revelation, but would become the very buttresses of the sanctuary.

I humbly hope that from this institution there will go forth a wholesome atmosphere of true wisdom, that its pupils will be taught that "the first man in the accomplishments of Philosophy, which the world ever saw, sat," as Chalmers has eloquently described him, "at the book of Nature in the humble attitude of its interpreter and its pupil—that all the docility of conscious ignorance threw a sweet and softening lustre around the radiance even of his most splendid discoveries," and will early learn to draw the distinction between the finite capacity of man, which can apply itself only to the

contemplation of one single part at a time, and the infinite comprehension of God, which fashioneth all the parts of his works at once. As Bacon has gracefully worded it—"For as when a carver cuts and graves an image, he shapes only that part whereupon he works, and not the rest; but contrariwise, when Nature makes a flower or living creature, she engenders and brings forth rudiments of all the parts at once." May it be given to you, Professors of this Institution, and to you, its earliest pupils, "to contemplate (in the beautiful language of Cardinal Wiseman) God's works in the visible and in the moral world, not in shreds and little fragments, but as woven together into the great web of universal harmony."

And this is a matter of great practical importance, for in the public mind in this country there is an inseparable connexion between religion and morals—religion as the fountain, morals as the stream of life which flows from it. And to no class of men, not even excepting the ministers of religion, is purity of morals more important than to the Physician. To no individual are the sacred recesses of the domestic sanctuary so freely opened as to the Physician. He is the counsellor of the wife and the mother—the friend of the sister and daughter, from whom no secrets may be hid. If there be a dark spot in the family life, he knows it—if there be bitterness and anguish of spirit around the hearthstone, it is poured into his bosom—if shame or guilt cast their deep sorrow upon the heart, to him must it be unveiled. He comes and goes a ministering spirit of health and mercy to whom is entrusted the honor, the character, the life of those we love best in the world. How essential that an atmosphere of moral purity should breathe around such a visitant! How instantly must the whisper of immorality dissipate the charm, and change into an intercourse of constraint, or else destroy altogether, the intimacy of such a friend! God grant that this school may be, not only a school of medicine, but one also of high honor and pure morality.

Upon you, the first Professors of this Medical School, and

you, its first pupils, will depend much of its future character. It is remarkable, in the history of literary institutions, how quickly a reputation becomes fixed upon a school, whether for good or evil, and how difficult it is to change it afterwards. The first classes of this school will probably settle its fate forever. If those, who have now just entered this College, shall show, by their industry and good order while connected with it, and by their high character and solid attainments, when they shall carry away with them its diplomas, that a healthy tone of morals and of learning has pervaded its walls, they will do much to give it a character with those whose patronage can alone sustain it. In this age of rapid intercommunication, when the discoveries of Science in the remotest parts of the world may be known within a few months—when the improvements in any branch of the medical profession are instantly transmitted through a thousand channels to the extremities—it matters little where a medical education is obtained, so the Professors are alive to the honor of their profession and their own reputation. Here, in Savannah, all that is done or discovered in Philadelphia, New York or Boston, in London, Edinburgh or Paris, can be known within a few weeks, and your Lecture Rooms may at once re-echo the advancements of any of the distinguished Schools of Medicine more advantageously, perhaps, than they could be studied at their focus—more advantageously, because more immediately adapted to the practical wants of the student and the country. More will depend, therefore, with parents in choosing the Medical School in which their sons shall be trained, upon the moral character of its pupils, upon the industry and acquirements which distinguish them, than upon its locality or its antiquity. Almost any where can a good medical education be obtained, but not any where do you find Medical Schools having a reputation for sobriety and good order. Let this, young gentlemen, be your pride, that the Medical School of Savannah shall be distinguished for its laboriousness, for its active industry, for its solid acquirements, for its pervading good breeding. Never forget that your profession will carry you, if you are successful in

it, into the most refined circles, and therefore calls for good manners—that it will connect you intimately with the domestic circle and demands a high moral tone—that it will place at your mercy many of the most sacred confessions of life, and requires a keen sense of honor. These things should be acquired now during your noviciate—they will not come at a moment's bidding, if they have been neglected in early life, and if these years are mispent, either intellectually or morally, they can never be redeemed. Life will be entrusted to your hands—honor to your hands—virtue to your keeping—and the inner shrines of domestic life. Be, therefore, not only Physicians, but Gentlemen—not only Gentlemen, but Christians, and your Alma Mater will, for generations to come, praise and bless those who laid for her a foundation of noble, high-toned reputation.



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